Meeting Reports

The 2003 CCP13/NCD Workshop in Cambridge

Fitzwilliam College provided an excellent and compact setting for the 2003 CCP13/NCD Annual Workshop, which, like its predecessors, proved to be a very enjoyable meeting. The College also hosted us very helpfully and well. All the local arrangements for the Workshop, which ran from July 2-4, had been sorted out by Jane Crawshaw who had forgotten nothing. Supported by the willing and expert help of the stalwarts of these Workshops on the registration desk, Alison Mutch and Sue Waller, and the expert photography and technical help of Stuart Eyres (see next page), everything ran smoothly and without hassle, and I for one am very indebted to them all.

The Workshop included the usual mix of presentations on synthetic polymers, biological fibres, solution scattering, liquid-crystalline structures and structural modelling, along with poster presentations and hands-on tutorials on existing and new software packages. Because this year was the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the structure of DNA by Watson and Crick using fibre diffraction data obtained by Rosalind Franklin in the laboratory of Maurice Wilkins, it seemed entirely appropriate to include in the Workshop a presentation on the early history of DNA fibre diffraction analysis. This talk was to have been given by Professor Struther Arnott FRS, who was part of the Wilkins team that actually confirmed the true DNA structure about 10 years after the initial discovery; a structure that was, in fact, significantly different in detail from the original Watson & Crick version. Unfortunately, in the end, Struther was unable to come, but we were delighted to be able to ask another pioneer in the Wilkins team, Dr. Don Marvin, to present his personal view of the early DNA story at King's College London - and fascinating it was too. I am very grateful to Don for stepping in at such short notice and for giving such an interesting presentation.

A major talk on the last day of the meeting was given by one of our leading fibre diffractionists, Professor Alan Windle FRS. Along with Jane Crawshaw, Alan was also our 'host' in Cambridge. His talk opened up a new area for possible fibre diffraction studies, namely the analysis of carbon nanotubes. This also raised the interesting possibility of extending our range of useful radiations beyond X-rays and Neutrons to Electrons, since many carbon nanotube structures, and indeed other nano-structures, lend themselves to analysis by electron diffraction methods. Professor Don Caspar and his team had already raised this possibility in his presentation on amyloid structure at the 2002 Workshop at Keele University together with their subsequent publication in *Fibre Diffraction Review* (Diaz-Avalos *et al.*, FDR 2003, **11**, 79-86). Since the 'nano' area is one of such growing importance, both in the materials science and biological arenas, the presentation at the Cambridge Workshop by Alan Windle was a timely sampler of what might be done not just with carbon nanotubes but also with protein (or DNA) nanostructures.

As usual we had an excellent conference dinner on the second day of the Workshop and as usual it was my pleasure on this occasion to be able to award two significant cash prizes to those chosen by our independent judges to be the best two posters at the Workshop. This time the winners were Elisabeth Joebstl and Valeria Castelletto, whose extended 'prize-winning' abstracts appear elsewhere in this Volume of *Fibre Diffraction Review*. Since the standard of the science and the quality of presentation of posters is at such a high level these days, to be awarded a best poster prize is a significant achievement - and the cash prizes are well worth having! Our congratulations go to Elisabeth and to Valeria on their excellent achievements.

John Squire - Imperial College London - April 2004

Don't forget the next CCP13/NCD workshop at Cardiff University in July 2005!

Scenes from the 2003 Cambridge Workshop